Introduction

Human behavior, especially in contexts of vulnerability, is rarely isolated — it is socially constructed, internalized, and often unconsciously repeated. This short reflection emerges from a real experience during a therapy group session with women in recovery from addiction, now revisited through the lens of sociological theory. It is an attempt to translate lived practice into academic reflection.

What began as a seemingly trivial refusal of bread and butter during lunch turned into a gateway to deeper truths — trauma, guilt, and a longing for recognition. As **Émile Durkheim** would explain, social facts impose themselves on individuals like invisible forces: even unknowingly, these women were responding to cultural norms about sexuality, body image, and perceived self-worth.

The collective repetition of behavior echoes **Gabriel Tarde's** idea that **social imitation** is a key driver of action. Meanwhile, **Max Weber** would urge us to ask: *What meaning did they assign to the act of losing weight?* Was it health-related, a matter of self-care — or a symbolic preparation for sex, as a way to feel validated again?

At the same time, these women carry a wounded **habitus**, shaped by past experiences of abuse, neglect, and symbolic violence — as described by **Pierre Bourdieu**. Through an emotional exercise ("I hate you because..."), what initially looked like sexual desire was revealed as unspoken pain, accumulated over years — a need to feel loved in the very space where they were once harmed.

Written from lived experience, this text now finds resonance in the classical voices of Sociology. As **Auguste Comte** reminded us, to understand society is to observe it systematically. In this case, the observation was done through listening, presence, and vulnerability — and it is this kind of listening that now becomes shared reflection.

Sex and Recovery

Yesterday at lunchtime, I noticed the clients started saying:

— "No bread, no butter, please."
— "No, no, no butter, no bread."

These were the elders and the 3B clients — the ones who are almost done with their treatment.

I went over to them and said:
“No bread and butter, huh? So, who’s getting ready to have sex?”
Most of them raised their hands. Some even raised both hands.

They all started laughing and saying they needed to lose weight.
To which I replied:
“Why now, at the end of treatment? You're losing weight because you’re getting yourselves ready to have sex.”

And they actually agreed.

Then I thought: *I need to bring them back to the focus of treatment...*
But I couldn’t just tell them it’s too soon to think about sex.
So I had to find a way — another way to send the message, and let them believe it came from **them**, not from **me**.

The next morning at 9 a.m., my brain kicked in.

I called the group together and circled them up.
Then I asked five of them to step into the center of the circle, each with a pillow.

No one understood what was going on —
“This counselor must be crazy!” — they laughed.

Then I explained:
“One at a time, go into the middle, hit the pillow, and say: ‘I hate you because…’”

And guess what came out?

“I hate you because you molested me.”
“I hate you because you left me alone with our children.”
“I hate you because you abandoned me.”
“I hate you, Mom, because you never cared for me.”
“I hate you because you died.”
“I hate it because I was just a little girl.”
“I hate you because I'm tired of being abused by men.”
“I hate you because this is my second time in treatment.”

“I hate you because you destroyed my life.”
“I hate you because you kept messing around.”

All of them started crying — not only because of their **own** pain, but because they could feel their **sisters’** pain too.

They knew exactly what the others were feeling.
Because they **are** them — each one of them part of the same story of abuse and survival.

At 10 a.m., I circled them up again.

This time, we listened to an audiobook called:
“Verbally Abusive Relationships.”

And I asked:

What’s hiding behind the desire for sex?
What comes with it?
What happens next?
Are you ready to have sex without being abused?
Can you really handle it now?
Are you sure that’s what matters?
Are you really sure?
What truly happens when you have sex?
What haven’t you been talking about?
What’s the real story?

Honestly… I don’t think they felt horny anymore 😊

At the end, I looked at them and said:

“So… you still want to have sex? :)
Welcome back to treatment.”

And by 11:30 a.m., guess what?
They were all eating bread again. 😄😉

Escrito por Ivone do Vale,

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